

**INTRODUCTION:**

Today, we're going to look into the theme of Jesus calling His first disciples. This message is called Five Who Followed In Faith. Being a disciple or a follower of Jesus Christ is no little issue; it carries great weight in importance alongside with discipline. Remember this: Little demands get little response from people. Big demands get heroic responses from people. That's the type of demands Jesus made and continues to make on people today.

This is true in any field - especially that of sport. A good sportsman requires great discipline. E.g. Just recently in the 2000 Olympics, when a interviewer asked World-Champion swimmer, Ian Thorpe, how he'll go in the race, the champ replied, "I don't wake up 4am every morning not to win!" You see, he understands the great demands of his profession, and so he adheres to great discipline. Good coaches place great demands on their teams, and through discipline and rigid training, he gets a quality, winning team. There is no such thing as a great team that revolves around a mediocre coach.

Jesus places great demands on His followers. Jesus is never interested in just filling out and swelling up the numbers of Christianity. Jesus is interested in building a quality body, whose muscles and joints and bones and limbs fit together and work properly into a quality lifestyle. He didn't pull you from the ranks of mediocre humanity just to swell the ranks of a church. No, He calls you just as He called the five men we're going to look at this morning with a global concept in mind. Something big. Something worldwide. Something that works powerfully. Something that makes a difference in the way we live!

**BODY:****1. GENERAL ORIENTATION**

Let's first get a brief overview of the ground we're about to cover this morning. Today we really will stick within the Bible, so if you haven't got one, go get one now. Without a Bible, you'll only be listening to human opinion.

**A. Time:** Verses 29-51 read very much like a 3-day diary. Notice the various "next day" statements in verses 29, 35, and 43. This is exactly how it all happened chronologically.

**B. Structure:** Now the structure of the passage is again simple and straightforward. With each of the five men there seems to be an evangelistic approach to the gospel, which comes in the form of a message, with a response following.

**C. People:** Now a final word about the characters we're about to meet. There are five men here, however only four are actually named: Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. The fifth is John who, as the author, remains unnamed.

Let me say a word about these men before we analyse this passage as far as the approach, the message, and the response is concerned. These men are often presented in popular religious literature as saints. Aren't they?

Various Catholic churches are named after an apostle. I remember growing up in Springwood and there was a church down the road which was called St. Andrews. I remember once attending a service there, in which I was to become a Godfather to someone, and there used to stand there a statue of a saintly meek-looking man - it was meant to be Andrew. He had his hands folded, wore the sandals with the flowing robes and there seemed to be an aura around it. And I remember seeing a few people around it who touched it and looked at it as if to say, "Oh wow! Saint Andrew."

Let me tell you something: Andrew was a nothing-special type of a guy. In fact, the best thing you could say about him was that he was Simon-Peter's brother. He always had to live in the shadow of his older brother. These guys are not saintly. They are saints in that they are members of the body of Christ, but they're not saintly. They're not flawless. They're not perfect specimens of human perfection. They come across on Scripture as very ordinary, T-shirt-and-blue-jeans hard working men.

## **2. SPECIFIC EXPOSITION**

Let's look at Andrew and John together.

### **A. ANDREW AND JOHN. 35-39**

The scene is staged here to spotlight a transference of allegiance from John the Baptist to Jesus - which fulfilled the Baptist's mission of "making straight the way for the Lord" (v.23 - we looked at this 2 weeks ago). Not surprisingly, the two disciples followed after Jesus.

**Approach:** The approach John the Baptist used here is what is termed mass evangelism. This means that there was one gifted person who gave the good news to large numbers. Today we know them as Billy Graham, or D. L. Moody, or Charles Finney, or John Wesley. They swept the nation with the news of Christ.

**Message:** John the Baptist was the first evangelist of the first century; he pointed to Christ and said to everyone, "There's the Lamb of God, follow Him!" That is the only message a true evangelist has. True evangelism revolves around a true presentation of Jesus Christ and nothing else.

**Response:** When the two heard this, they followed Jesus. How simple! How beautiful! That's precisely what happened when you heard the good news.

By the way, can you think back to when you first heard it? Can you remember the person God used in your life? Maybe it was your brother, or your father. Maybe a friend, a pastor or a preacher. Maybe it was a work colleague who consistently lived out his faith in Christ, day in, day out. Someone who continually carried out a lifestyle of truth and honesty - and that spoke to you and led you to faith in the Lord Jesus. Think back. All you did was follow Jesus Christ.

- *I heard a song on the radio the other day called, "Jimmy got saved!" I found out the story to it also. It's about a man called Jim Boss who was led to Christ by an evangelist in a downtown Los Angeles tent meeting in the 1940's. Jimmy was a mountain of a man whose life was characterised by criminal involvements. He was also a preacher's son, but he rejected the gospel point-blank. He was a deceitful, unbelieving man. He'd been to religious services all his life and heard the gospel so many times he was weary of them.*

*Somehow he managed to attend this tent meeting and at the end of the service they stood up to sing the familiar, " Just as I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me, And that thou bid'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come. "*

*Just as he was about to turn and leave, a little runt of a man shimmied up to him and said, "Say, wouldn't you like to be saved? Wouldn't you like to go forward?" Big Jim said, "I felt like I just wanted to knock that little pipsqueak flat down to the ground. Then I finally looked at him and he was praying. And I thought to myself, 'How can I hit a praying man?'" He then went on to relate that suddenly the Spirit of God went to work and before he knew it, he was walking down that aisle giving his heart to Christ. Revolutionary change took place within his life.*

- That's the way it was with some of you, wasn't it? Remember when you gave your heart to Christ? Maybe you were like the self-sustained individual who wrote this:

*I have walked life's way with an easy tread  
I have travelled for pleasure and comfort led  
Until one day in a quiet place, I met the Master face-to-face.*

*With station, wealth and rank for my goal  
Much thought for my body but none for my soul  
I had entered to lend this fife's mad race, then I met the Master face-to-face.*

*I built my castles and reared them high  
Till their towers had pierced the blue of the sky  
I'd sworn to rule with an iron mace, till I met the Master face-to-face.*

*Aah, I met Him, and knew Him and blushed to see  
His eyes full of sorrow were fixed upon me  
I faltered and fell at His feet that day  
While my castles melted and vanished away  
They melted and vanished and in their place  
Nothing else could I see but the Master's face.*

*My thoughts are now for the souls of men  
I'd lost my life to find it again  
Since that day in the quiet place, when I met the Master face-to-face.*

That's the way it was with these two men. Andrew, the lesser brother. And John - Boanerges, a son of thunder, hot tempered, impetuous, strong-willed, later to become John, the beloved. They followed Him. Jesus' response to them: Verse 38 says that Jesus asks them what they want. What a probing question. In response, they want to know where He's staying. What a strange thing to say, isn't it? "Fellas, what are you looking for?" "Jesus,

where do you live?" Why would the disciples say that? Because that type of question demands time to think through your answer. They'll give him one once they spend some time with him and see what He's like.

- What's your motive for following Christ? To become part of a certain crowd, a going church, for your business affairs? It's a searching question - a motive question.

So they went and saw where He was staying - by the way, it's one of the rare times when Jesus' dwelling is mentioned. Some people speculate as to where He was staying but the fact is the place isn't important - the person is. So they stayed with Him for a few hours. Ever thought about staying with Jesus? You better. You'll be doing it for an eternity - MOST OF YOU! And they talked and got to know Him better.

## **B. SIMON PETER. 40-42**

The scene changes now and we see Andrew thoroughly convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. So what does he do? That very night he rushes off to find his brother, Simon. Let's try to bring to reality what must have happened: Knock, knock. He didn't say, "Aah, Saint Andrew. Why callest thou?" No, he must have said, "Andy, what's the matter? Why you here so late?" Andrew said, "We've found Him! We've found the Messiah! I've just left from His place. I know where He lives!"

And so we see Andrew leading another one to Jesus. It's interesting to note that every time we meet Andrew in this gospel he is bringing someone to Jesus. In chapter 6, he brings a little boy. In chapter 12, he brings some Greeks to Jesus. He may have lived in his brother's shadow, but he became and remained a faithful, fruitful follower.

So Simon stood before Jesus, and Jesus looked at him. Man, Jesus must have looked into his soul.

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**Approach:** Now, the approach Andrew used here is personal evangelism. One on one contact. It may be with someone you know, a co-worker, a friend.

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**Message:** The message is, "We have found the Messiah!"

**Response:** Here's the response. Jesus said, "You are called Simon". That name means 'shifty, vacillating, wavering'. But Jesus then said, "You shall be called Rock, Peter." Peter had a face-to-face encounter with Christ, and that was all the encouragement he needed to follow Him.

- Jesus saw them not as they were, but as they were to become. That's how He saw you and me. Under the magnifying glass of Scripture, we can see that Peter had a lot of rough edges - sometimes hard-headed, impulsive, impetuous. But Jesus was able to see beyond all that - beyond the rough edges to the precious stone beneath, beyond the stubbornness to the stability. Jesus had a jeweller's eye for spotting a diamond in the rough. Do you? Can you see the

potential in others? Can you see beneath all the rough edges to the precious stone hidden within your child? Can you spot that jewel-in-the-making when you look at your spouse or your friend? Oftentimes, a simple recognition of the presence of the jewel is all the encouragement people need to start chipping away at their own rough edges, bringing that precious stone to light.

- Did you read your local Quest Newspaper this week? Brian Andrew, the weekly Christian columnist, wrote down a worthy quote by Andrew Carnegie, who was one of America's wealthiest men. He said, "Men are developed the same way gold is mined. When the gold is mined, several tons of dirt must be moved to get an ounce of gold; but one doesn't go into the mine looking for dirt - one goes in looking for gold."

That's what gave Peter hope. Jesus saw him as he was to become. You see, a small challenge - a small response. A big challenge - a heroic response.

### C. PHILIP. 43-44

John rescues Philip from oblivion, that is, John is the only writer that gives any revealing character sketch of him in the Bible.

**Approach:** What we have here is an example of what can be called cold-contact evangelism. A stranger with another stranger. Jesus confronted him directly on the street.

**Message:** The message was simple and straightforward, "Follow Me."

**Response:** The response is implied in verses 44 - 46. Philip followed him. No high-pressure sales pitch. No recruiting posters. No campaign promises. No job security. No annual salary. Just a call to abandon everything and put Jesus in first place.

Let's have a closer look at abandonment.

- Isaiah 53:6 A universal statement about the nature of man. We each go our own way just like sheep. Sheep can just be so silly when you let them alone - they bleat, run around in circles, go one way and then back. Philip was going his own way and Jesus met him.

*Job 23:10-12 Here we have a strong contrast of abandonment. 'His steps, His way, His lips, His mouth.' Not our way - His.*

Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me." And I am suggesting to you this morning that Philip left his way and went God's way. Something some of you might need to do.

- Some of you may come to church here; you may carry a Bible; you may even have brought a friend along before - but you know in your heart-of-hearts that you have not fully abandoned your way to go God's way - yet. This doesn't mean that you need to enter the ministry full-time. It's just that you have not yet truly given Jesus Christ first place in your life. I want you to chew on what Philip did.

#### **D. NATHANAEL. 45-51**

Immediately and enthusiastically, Philip found Nathanael and told him the good news. Nathanael responds in honest scepticism, without hypocrisy. When they met, Jesus greeted Nathanael in an astonishing manner which left an amazing impression upon him.

**Approach:** Philip's approach is similar to Andrew's approach to Peter. However, it is possible that the Word of God played an integral part in Nathanael's coming to Christ - perhaps we could call it Word evangelism. Let me explain: Jesus said that He saw Nathanael under a fig tree. The Jewish Talmud (which is the writing of Jewish scholars and became the lifestyle of many Jews today) encourages sincere Jews to pray, meditate, and study the Scriptures, at least once a day, in places of solitude such as under a large tree. Oftentimes a fig tree provided such a place where they were to seek out God at least once a day.

I think that Nathanael was under the tree, into the Word studying and meditating. That's why Philip mentions Moses and the prophets because Nathanael was • digging in the Old Testament prophecies. Remember Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8? That's another good example of Word evangelism.

**Message:** Philip was saying to Nathanael, "Aah, Nat. You're looking for him. Well, we've found him. He's Jesus of Nazareth."

"NAZARETH??!!" was Nathanael's reply. You're probably wondering why he responded like that. Well, if you lived in that time you'd know that Nazareth was a stop-over caravan town. A town known for vice and immorality. Today, it would be just like saying, "We've found Jesus of King's Cross!!" That's not blasphemous, that's the way it was. They expected Jesus to come from the highest hill of Rome - but Nazareth, yuck!

Now, I'm going to say to you that Nathanael had every right in the world to say that because Jesus didn't rebuke him at all for it. When Jesus saw him he didn't say, "Aah, there you are you old critic!" No, He really said, "Behold, an Israelite who is honest!" Nathanael honestly wonders how a Nazarene could come and be the Messiah. He was logical and a thinker.

- By the way, that's exactly how Jesus accepts every sceptic sitting here today. Every other Christian may reject you for your scepticism but Jesus has never rejected a sceptic who has come to him by faith.

**Response:** Jesus said to him, "Nathanael, when you were under the fig tree I saw you." "How could you? I was all alone." Jesus continued, "I saw you long before Philip arrived." And that was all Nathanael needed to hear.

Nathanael responded by saying that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Israel. Jesus said to him, in effect, "Nathanael, I'm offering a message as the Son of God to this nation and ultimately, the world." And Nathanael said, "I accept it. I believe it. Jesus told him that because he believes, he can expect even greater things. He

goes on to say that he'll even see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Remember the last time you read of a similar picture - in Genesis 28, when Jacob saw a vision of a staircase leading up to heaven with angels going up and down on it. What Jesus is saying in effect is that He is now that 'staircase'. He is now the link between God and man, and Nathanael, in due time, will see and understand this.

- I heard a story of a preacher called Ian Thomas who said that he boarded a plane and wanted to be seated alone so that he could prepare his itinerary and study for his sermon. So he had a good spot all by himself, and this student of the Word began to work on his notes when all of a sudden, way across on the other side, he began to hear the sound of pages turning. He thought, "What in the world is that?" He looked over and this guy yells out to him, "Say! You know anything about the Bible?" Ian said to himself, "Know anything about the Bible?" The man continued, "Yeah, I've been reading here in ... the... John and about 'Ni-co-demus.' You know anything about that?" So Ian said, "What can you do? So I went over to him and led Him to Christ."*

That's Word evangelism. The Word had done its work and had wedged itself into his heart, and he couldn't do anything else. That's what happened to some of you. God's Word had that magnetic appeal and you've never been the same - may that never cease.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, let me point out that we have just examined the first five followers of Christ - the approach, the message, and their response. Each of them made a personal decision that changed their lives forever. My message has one design today - to get you off the fence. You've ridden it long enough. Jesus doesn't want just a couple of minutes you've got to spare. He says, "I want your life! Every minute of every day, brought under the authority of my control. Get off the fence."

At this moment, I want to invite you to step off the fence. No, I command you, with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, to get off the fence. If you've never trusted Jesus Christ, and the cross, the empty tomb, available and provided to you, without a cost on your behalf, then, by faith, give Jesus your heart. Not a part of it, all of it. No reservations.

*Christians, what I'm saying to you is this: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Christ is priority number one.*

Father, forgive us for the times we've ridden the fence, those moments of indecision - the months, even the years. May we be gripped by the importance of responding by faith, a decision to serve Jesus Christ and Him only. May it be more important than the necessary food of this noon hour, more important than any friendship, any business, or any ministry. I ask for Jesus' sake, Amen.